

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 4706

E.O. 11652: XGDS2
TAGS: PINT, NL
SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AS SEEN BY ITS CHAIRMAN

1. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION PROFESSOR PIET STEENKAMP, CHAIRMAN OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC APPEAL (CDA), EXPRESSED OPTIMISM TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A COMPLETELY MERGED CDA IN 1980 AND ALSO ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO LAST OUT ITS TERM UNTIL 1981. STEENKAMP SEES HIS PARTY AS BROADLY BASED WITH APPEAL TO STUDENTS AS WELL AS TO THE ELDERLY. TO MAINTAIN THAT APPEAL IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE LEFTIST MEMBERS IN THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY GROUP SUCH AS VAN HOUWELINGEN AND SCHOLTEN, JUST AS IT WAS TO INCLUDE MEMBERS ON THE RIGHT LIKE VAN LEIJENHORST AND TOLMAN. THE CDA DRAWS ITS SUPPORT FROM A WIDE SWATH IN THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. CDA VOTERS WERE MEMBERS OF A SUBSTANTIAL GROUP WHO WANTED TO VOTE FOR A MAJOR PARTY BUT WHO DID NOT WANT TO VOTE FOR EITHER THE LABOR PARTY (PVDA) OR THE MORE CONSERVATIVE LIBERAL PARTY (VVD). STEENKAMP SAID THAT THE PROCESS OF DECONFESSIONALIZATION, SO SIGNIFICANT IN THE 1960'S AND THE

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EARLY 70'S, WAS CONTINUING. HOWEVER, HE SAW IT MORE AS AN ANTI-CLERICAL THAN AN ANTI-RELIGION PROCESS, LEAVING INTACT CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AMONG A LARGE NUMBER OF VOTERS. THERE IS A WIDESPREAD PREFERENCE BY MANY VOTERS FOR A SOCIETY BASED ON CHRISTIAN IDEALS.

2. CDA FLOOT LEADER AANTJES. STEENKAMP SEEMS TO LIKE

AANTJES, NOTING THAT AANTJES AND HE WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM WITH THE COMMON GOAL OF ESTABLISHING A CLEAR CDA IMAGE. IN HIS VIEW, AANTJES KEEPS IN MIND THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING AND FILLING OUT THE CDA'S IMAGE WHENEVER HE PRESENTS PARTY POSITIONS. NOT ONLY IS AANTJES EFFECTIVE ON THE LEFT, STEENKAMP MAINTAINED, BUT HE ALSO KNOWS WHEN TO GIVE A SOP TO CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS-WITNESS HIS RECENT LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER VAN AGT WHICH CALLS FOR MORE CDA MAYORS TO BE NAMED.

3. FUTURE CDA COALITION PARTNER. STEENKAMP SAID THAT HE WOULD MAKE NO COMMITMENTS ABOUT FUTURE COALITION PARTNERS PRIOR TO THE NEXT SCHEDULED NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1981. NOR WOULD THE CDA ALLOW THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE COALITION WITH THE PVDA INFLUENCE ITS BEHAVIOR DURING THIS CABINET. STEENKAMP SAID THAT HE TOLD DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WIEGEL (VVD) THAT THE CDA COMMITMENT TO THE LATTER'S PARTY RAN ONLY UNTIL THE NEXT ELECTIONS.

4. STEENKAMP THE MAN. DURING THIS CONVERSATION IN HIS BOOK-JAMMED OFFICE AT THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY IN EINDHOVEN, STEENKAMP DISPLAYED WIT, A LIGHT TOUCH, AND CONSIDERABLE CHARM, QUALITIES WHICH WERE USEFUL TO HIM IN SPEARHEADING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE (NOW) LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY IN THE NETHERLANDS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS THE REPUTATION OF A ZEALOT, IN CONVERSATION
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HE IS RELAXED AND URBANE. THERE IS NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO HIS CAUSE-THE CREATION OF A UNITED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

5. MEMCON FOLLOWS.
JOSEPH

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NNN

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